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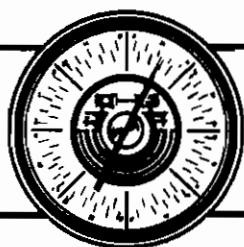
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THE BAROMETER

In further consideration of the tenet set forth in the "New Horizons" article in the November 1969 issue of *Naval War College Review*, three problems antithetical to "A Concept for Carrier Air Capability in the Standing Naval Force Atlantic" (SNFL) are brought to mind:

The first, and probably the overriding problem, is discussed briefly in the last paragraph of the article. It is that of Royal Navy manning of H.M.S. *Ark Royal* and H.M.S. *Eagle* were those ships to become permanent units in SNFL. According to public media, British CVA's are to be retired owing to fundamental economic considerations. This is taken to mean that the Government of the United Kingdom cannot continue to justify the operating and maintenance costs of their CVA's vis-à-vis derived national defense gains. It is assumed that personnel costs (active duty pay, retaining pay, allowances and indirect personnel costs) are and will continue to be a part of those economic considerations. If *Ark Royal* and *Eagle* were to be fully manned by Royal Navy officers and men, even if the ships themselves were no longer cost factors in British defense planning, it is a valid point that the United Kingdom apparently has not planned for such costs, as indicated in the article, and would, therefore, probably be extremely reluctant to alter its thinking along those lines. On the other hand, partial or full multinational manning would bring out such rudimentary and consequential problems as language difficulties, varying training standards, varying traditions

and customs, internal chain-of-command policy differences, varying military jurisprudential standards and a host of related difficulties made all the more difficult by the extremely large and diversified personnel requirements unique to an attack aircraft carrier. The implications of such far-reaching problems are not adequately treated in the article.

The second problem is that of the advancing age of *Ark Royal* and *Eagle*. The former finished building in 1954; the latter in 1952. To ask some or all of the NATO nations to share the expenses of those ships is to request mutual investment in an experiment not heretofore attempted using naval hardware already 15 to 18 years old at this writing. This problem may be palatable, however, because of the basic cost-sharing feature itself, which is an appealing and thought-provoking proposition.

The third problem is that of national identity. The article proposes assigning the carriers to the "custody" of NATO. What, exactly and legally, is "custody" in this case? Custody implies the care of something belonging to someone else. Is this the meaning intended? Would *Ark Royal* and *Eagle* continue to belong to the United Kingdom even though they might be in the "custody" of NATO? If not, what national ensign would they fly? The essay does not elaborate. The existing units assigned to SNFL are just that: "assigned." They fly their national flags and are full-fledged possessions of the nations to whom they belong in the expected sense under international law. Their "custody" has not been a germane

question. Were it conceivable and feasible for *Ark Royal* and *Eagle* to somehow achieve *international* identity, the question of the *national* allegiance of their crews, British by origin or otherwise, rears as something of a specter. If, on the other hand, the ships were to retain their current national identity or acquire a different one, there would still be problems relative to multinational cost-sharing in an international strategic venture in which several nations expect to reap benefits but in which the strategic instruments belong only to one. This is not a new question, by any means, in the affairs of the Atlantic community.

The pronounced need for one or more ready, Allied CVA's in EAST-LANT and NORLANT hardly needs explanation. The Soviets are thought to regard attack carriers as one of the two major naval threats to their nation. In retaliation against carrier striking forces and other combatants operating in the middle and northern Atlantic, the Soviet Union is likely to dispatch the bulk of its surface, subsurface and naval air units out of their Northern Fleet ports, around North Cape and into the Atlantic via the Iceland-Faeroes Gap. To have, at the very point of ingress, the defensive posture represented by one or two attack carriers situated within mere hours of their holding stations and historically familiar with ports and navigational procedures in the area presents what is probably the most economical and reasonable response to Soviet offense in that area. As explained in the article, having a full-time U.S. CVA in EAST/NORLANT would be an unrealistic ambition in light of current U.S. commitments coupled with the actual likelihood of Soviet aggression in

the Atlantic as compared to other locations where the likelihood is greater.

What is the answer? A modification to the proposal contained in the article may have merit: The United Kingdom could retain their CVA's, augmenting and refitting as necessary, with all costs, including those of personnel, shared, in agreed amounts, by participating NATO nations (including the United Kingdom) in keeping with defined, mutually agreeable, and legalized NATO goals. Actual funding and accounting could be programmed and administered by the United Kingdom Government *using funds payed to that government for the specified purpose*. National identity would remain British with the immediate directing headquarters being whichever one is considered appropriate in the NATO organization. Britain would be allowed to retain her CVA strength, funding limitations would be overcome, and NATO would acquire a new and much-needed resource in the form of carrier-based striking naval air power for use against an ever-growing Soviet capability. There would remain only the problem of the individual national willingness of NATO's parties to support the program. In answer to that, it may be most simple and expedient to try this proposal on a provisional basis with the final acceptance or abandonment to come after an initial evaluation period. After all, SNFL itself was born in much the same way. The objective is to not leave the arena while you can still hold out one of your most menacing weapons before an adversary already grown too powerful.

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